



## MINUTES

**Joint Workshop Meeting  
City of Bryan and City of College Station  
Planning & Zoning Commissions  
Tuesday, May 18, 2010, at 11:00 a.m.  
Council Chambers, Bryan Municipal Building  
300 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, Texas**

Disclaimer:     *The meeting minutes herein are a summarization of meeting procedures, not a verbatim transcription*

**1. Call to order.**

Commissioner Beckendorf called the meeting to order at 11:27am. John Nichols, Commissioner of the College Station P&Z, stated he was thankful for the hospitality shown by the Bryan P&Z and staff.

**2. Introduction of City of Bryan Planning and Zoning Commissioners and staff.**

Commissioners Present: Mr. Michael Beckendorf, Mr. Don Maxwell, Mr. Michael Parks, Ms. Helen Chavarria, Reverend G.H. Jones, Mr. Johnny Bond, and Mr. Prentiss Madison  
Commissioners Absent: Mr. Chuck Konderla

Bryan Staff Present: Mr. Martin Zimmerman, Ms. Julie Fulgham, Ms. Michelle Audenaert, Mr. Randy Haynes, Mr. Dale Picha, Ms. Meredith Wilganowski, Ms. Nikki Norton, Ms. Linda Huff, Mr. Paul Kaspar, Mr. Joey Dunn, and Ms. Maggie Dalton.

**3. Introduction of City of College Station Planning and Zoning Commissioners and staff.**

Commissioners Present: Mr. John Nichols, Mr. Doug Slack, Mr. Paul Greer, Mr. Mike Ashfield, and Mr. Hugh Stearns  
Commissioners Absent: Mr. Scott Schafer and Mr. Thomas Woodfin

Staff Present: Mr. Lance Simms, Ms. Molly Hitchcock, Ms. Carla Robinson, Ms. Lindsay Kramer, Mr. Jason Schubert, Ms. Lauren Hovde, Mr. Matt Robinson, Mr. Matthew Hilgemeier, and Ms. Brittany Caldwell.

**4. Presentation from representatives of Texas A&M University Transportation Services and of The District regarding each entity's public transportation operations.**

Dale Picha introduced the first two speakers of the meeting: Mr. Doug Williams from Texas A&M Transportation Services and Mr. John McBeth, the Vice President of the Brazos Transit District.

Mr. Williams stated that the Aggie Spirit Bus department, run by Texas A&M University, is probably one of the most efficient student run transit services in the nation. The fleet currently has 80 buses and

6 para-transit vehicles for use around the Bryan and College Station area. Annually, the Aggie Spirit transports between 5 and 6 million passengers, proving to be a well utilized part of the A&M system. He explained that one trip to campus counts the same person twice: once when you get on the bus going to your destination and once again when you return home from your destination. Currently, they recently received money to install \$2 million worth of technology upgrades on the buses. These updated include: Global Positioning System (GPS), camera, automatic passenger counts, and hardware/software for scheduling.

Mr. Williams stated that the buses cost around \$53 an hour to operate, with regards to fuel cost. He then further explained pay rates and the online communication portal.

The floor was opened to questions.

Commissioner Nichols asked if the \$70 student fee charged by Texas A&M University was mandatory. Mr. Williams answer that it was a mandatory fee and that the transit service used to issue bus passes if you purchased them. However, they found that it is easier to charge a flat fee than to have students and other riders buy individual bus passes.

Commissioner Greer asked which of the 9 off-campus routes currently went through or into the City of Bryan. Mr. Williams stated that there are currently 2 off-campus routes which went through or into the City of Bryan and that the Blinn route had the lowest ridership of all the off-campus routes.

Commissioner Maxwell asked how long the buses ran throughout the day. Mr. Williams stated that the buses run from 7am until 1pm on some routes. On-campus routes typically shut down route 5pm or 6pm, while off-campus routes run much longer.

Commissioner Stearns asked how long the buses were expected to last, referring to the start of the transit program back in 1982. Mr. Williams stated that the buses at the university are well maintained and rarely have issues. Most buses generally last around twenty years. The current buses on fleet with transit have an expected life of 15 years, but they are extremely well maintained, so they are expected to last even longer.

Commissioner Parks asked if there was a certain priority when it came to bus ridership, if it was only students or if employees of the university were also allowed to ride the buses. Mr. Williams stated that anyone could ride the buses since they no longer collect bus passed. With the flat rate being charged to students, the monetary value lost on those not associated with A&M are picked up through student fees so transit comes out a little ahead.

Commissioner Parks asked traffic signaling for buses were a priority. Doug Williams stated that there were too many buses to have priority at lights.

Mr. Williams concluded his presentation

Mr. John McBeth, Vice president of the Brazos Transit District, stated that the Brazos Transit District has been in existence since 1974 and that they have grown from a 7 county ridership area to a 16 county ridership area. More than one million people are serviced. He stated that the District is a political subdivision of the Great State of Texas and that they receive funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). There are several sections utilized for the funding of the program.

- **B/CS - Section 5307 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Texas**

- Department of Transportation (TxDOT) State funds match the federal funds
- **The Woodlands** - Section 5307 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) State funds match the federal Funds
- **Rural Program** - Section 5311 (TxDOT) Both federal and state funds pass through TxDOT
- **Elderly & Disabled Program** - Section 5310 (TxDOT) Capital funds only
- **Capital Projects** - Section 5309 Congressionally earmarked funds
- **Farebox and Contract Revenue** - Section 5307 and 5311 programs only
- **Medicaid Contract** – Brazos Valley Region
- **Local Share** – Cities and Counties

Mr. McBeth stated that there six (6) different types of routes offered to the public through the Brazos Transit District. These are: fixed routes, paratransit, community circulators, park & ride, demand & response, and The Woodlands Waterway Corridor. Each of these has different availability depending on the demand of them. The new Jennings Station was completed in 2007 is located in downtown Lufkin, Texas. It is a multipurpose transit facility whose brick and stone exterior was modeled after a former Angelina County courthouse. Jennings Station is the hub for commercial bus lines and serves as a central transfer point for The District's fixed route bus system and for The District's rural transit carriers that bring veterans daily to board the large bus going to the DeBakey VA Hospital in Houston.

Mr. McBeth stated that the Brazos Transit District was an important part of the overall public transportation in Texas. The Brazos Transit District is responsible for 4% of the trips made in Texas each year, 5% of the hours clocked in, and 6% of the total miles travelled. Operating expenses from the B/CS area account for 8% of the total operating budget in the State of Texas; 4% were directly from the Brazos Transit District.

Mr. McBeth stated that the new Bryan parking garage cost \$14.7 million dollars and was designed to hold 1,000 vehicles at a time. The use of bus shelters at different locations were in the process of being built. These shelters would provide more protection from the elements. The Brazos Transit District operates the Charles Wilson VA shuttle and receives \$300,000 funding a year.

The floor was opened to questions.

Responding to questions from the commissioners, Mr. McBeth stated promoting free ridership would complicate the system and student fees are currently in place, and that the information on the Brazos Transit District was available online to anyone who wished to access it as well as in paper copies.

Mr. McBeth concluded his presentation.

## 5. Discussion and possible direction to staff regarding regional public transportation issues.

Commissioner Stearns stated that there was no context of mass transit in the master plan for either Bryan or College Station.

Commissioner Parks stated that density of a specific land use is important to accommodate and create bus routes. Apartment complexes provide high density areas.

Commissioner Maxwell stated that 3,000 people per square mile was ideal in order to create a transit routes and to build stations.

Commissioner Parks stated that when the City of Dallas was looking where to build their mass transit systems they looked for high density areas and purchased the land in which they felt would be the best place for the systems.

Commissioner Greer stated that The Woodlands waterway was a good example of transit relying on density. The Woodlands did not want a lot of congestion around the main town center, so the waterway brought the density to the area without also bringing the car traffic. The land value of the area has gone from \$4 million to nearly \$90 million.

Commissioner Parks asked where they wanted to see these bus pullouts. He asked for feedback.

Commissioner Greer stated that bus pullouts were dangerous and that they do not like seeing them in response.

Commissioner Parks stated that sidewalks and trees get people to the bus stops, and that these two items should be present up to 1,500 feet away from the stop. The commissioner then referred to the Livable Communities Presentation.

Commissioner Maxwell asked if the GPS that was soon to be installed on the Aggie Spirit buses would be web based.

Mr. Williams stated that the technology is not currently installed on the buses; however when it is installed students and citizens would be able to see the exact location of the bus through the internet.

There was no more discussion.

**6. Staff presentation and discussion regarding the City of College Station's non-residential architectural (NRA) standards and review process.**

Martin Zimmermann stated that the next presentation would be beneficial because the Bryan ordinance regarding NRA standards is not very strong. Mr. Zimmermann introduced Mr. Jason Schubert, Senior Planner with the City of College Station to give a presentation regarding NRA standards.

Mr. Schubert stated that the NRA standards and review process is enforced administratively by staff and does not require approvals from Council for most decisions. This makes the process faster and more efficient. It was stated that there are four types of buildings eligible for exemption from the NRA standards: Industrial, those in the Northgate District, Private and Public Utility Services, and Churches. Mr. Schubert then distributed a hand-out (on file) with more specific details on the different types of regulations being enforced by the City of College Station.

The paper was entitled: Summary of City of College Station Unified Development Ordinance Section 7.9 – Non-residential Architectural Standards.

Mr. Schubert presented the following:

- Applicability: NRA Standards apply to development and redevelopment, and façade changes to non-residential buildings
- Elements of Non-Residential Architecture Standards

- Building Mass and Design
  - Architectural elements to create visual interest are required
- Building Materials
  - Minimums and maximums are set for various types of building materials
- Building Colors
  - Colors must be on the approved College Station Color Palette
- Pedestrian & Bike Facilities
  - Each building should provide a bike rack for at least 4 bikes
- Parking Lots
  - Larger parking must conform to one of three UDO parking concepts
- Additional Standards for Larger Developments
  - For buildings or combination of buildings 20,000 square feet and larger
- Variances and Appeals
  - The Design Review Board (DRB) has to authority to hear and decide specific cases

Commissioner Bond stated that architects might not be willing to conform to these standards because they sometimes require a change in the design of the building. Mr. Schubert stated that the concept of the NRA standards was to break up long expanses of buildings and that plan alterations might result because of the NRA standards.

Mr. Schubert stated that Building Plots were based on cumulative square feet and, based on the square footage, is how the NRA standards would apply to that area. The four breaking points for square feet are: 5,000 square feet, 20,000 square feet, 50,000 square feet, and 150,000 square feet.

Commissioner Maxwell asked whether two separate owners within the same general area or building were defined as a single plot. Mr. Schubert stated that they were defined as a single plot and that the total square footage of the two buildings would define which NRA standards the building or buildings would use. Typically plots are divided by streets.

Mr. Schubert stated that Red Lobster on University Drive and Freebirds on Bypass 6 in College Station were two examples of Design Review Waiver. Commissioner Nichols mentioned that a miscommunication appeared to have occurred between the DRB and the applicant in the Freebirds case. The Freebirds requested that they be allowed to paint the outside of the building a blue sky color and have white cloud painted as well. While the variance was granted, the DRB was not sure if the end result was the approved usage of colors and materials.

The floor was opened for questions.

Commissioner Maxwell asked if the review board sees every case that comes through the city. Mr. Schubert stated that an application is required with a site plan at the beginning, and that 90% of the work is done by staff review. Only appeals are sent to the Design Review Board.

Commissioner Stearns asked if anything goes to the DRB from the Wolf Pen Creek district. Mr. Schubert stated that the review board must see everything in detail before anything can be built.

Commissioner Greer asked about the restaurant Chuy's and how far along in the approval for a variance they were. Mr. Schubert stated that the corporation is trying to create an image for all their restaurants. However, the standard for the exterior of the restaurant does not comply with the NRA standards enforced in the City of College Station. Another issue the City had with the corporation was the issue of exterior paint color.

Commissioner Stearns asked if there were many cases like the Freebirds' case, one that had been approved but turned out to be different than anticipated or not in compliance with the standards. Mr. Schubert stated that cases like that one are being dealt with are not common.

Commissioner Beckendorf asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

## **7. Discussion on future joint meeting agenda items.**

Martin Zimmerman stated that meeting twice a year seemed beneficial to both commissions. He stated that the next meeting would be held in the fall on a date yet to be determined. He thanked everyone for coming.

Commissioner Chavarria stated that the meeting was most informative.

Commissioner Stearns stated that he would like to see an update regarding the improvements of the Downtown Bryan project with regards to the density of the area and the transit effects on the area.

Commissioner Parks stated they would like more information on the University Drive corridor between Bypass 6 and Texas Avenue.

Commissioner Maxwell stated they did not like seeing students and citizens "hiking" to grocery stores and shops through areas without sidewalks along South College, and would like to put that on the next agenda.

Commissioner Beckendorf reminded the commission that the next joint meeting was to be held the next day, May 19<sup>th</sup>, at the Expo Center at noon.

## **8. ADJOURN**

Without objection; Bryan Commissioner Beckendorf and College Station Commissioner Nichols adjourned the meeting at 12:58pm.

These minutes were reviewed and approved by the City of Bryan Planning & Zoning Commission on the **3<sup>rd</sup> day of June, 2010.**

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Michael Beckendorf, Chairperson  
Planning and Zoning Commission  
City of Bryan, Texas

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Martin Zimmermann, Planning Administrator  
and Secretary to the Planning and Zoning  
Commission